

THE NAVY ENCOURAGES COMBAT: Cadets in lively bout at North Carolina Pre-Flight School, Chapel Hill. Lt. Charles Speidel, former Penn State coach, serves as the referee. (Official U. S. Navy photo.)

Wartime Wrestling at Annapolis

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The Navy has always encouraged aggressive contact sports as an excellent builder of morale and courage. The United States Naval Academy leads all service units in competitive teams and schedules with outside teams besides fostering a well organized program within the Academy.

Since the war began, wrestling at the Naval Academy has increased five-fold in popularity and in the number of midshipmen participating. There are several reasons for this increased activity: first, the importance of wrestling in acquiring effective hand to hand fighting methods; second, midshipmen have found it an excellent body conditioner, and third, our wartime sports program now has twenty intramural teams when under peacetime we had only four.

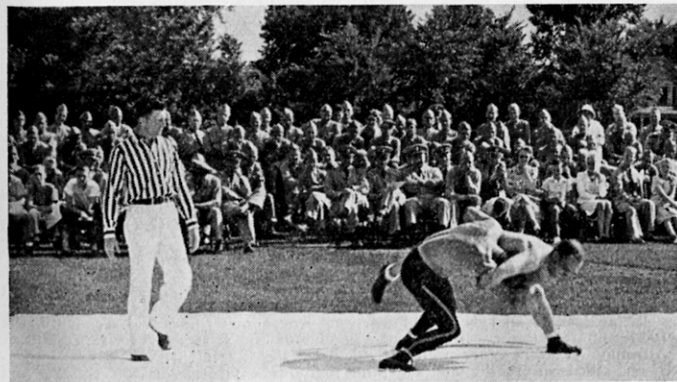
The war definitely has changed the holds taught here, by increasing the number and changing the method of instruction. All wrestling coaches know that by simply discarding the rule-book, wrestling becomes hand to hand fighting. Therefore, the twelve holds are taught the midshipmen and shown in two ways, legal and illegal. The latter is obviously used for hand to hand fighting.

Six of the holds are takedowns and trips of the feet. The next three holds are ones that can be used in a top position to control or injure an opponent. The last three holds are escapes from the underneath position after an opponent has thrown one to the deck. All these twelve holds are simple, effective ones that the average midshipman can master in a limited time.

All midshipmen get nine drills in wrestling their first two years in the Academy. In their first class, or senior year they are given eight drills in hand to hand fighting. They are taught principally how to use their wrestling holds to disarm an opponent with a knife, gun or club and to use their wrestling skill as an offensive attack against an opponent who may be as well trained as he is.

Too many hand to hand instructors teach their tricks as if the opposition is green and untrained.

My experience here at the Academy, where I have taught an average of 3,000 midshipmen a year for the past five years, has been that the individual the man is fighting must be considered as formidable as he himself is. Thus, he will not be surprised.



NAVY FLYERS THRIVE ON COMBAT: Iowa City Pre-Flight cadets in lively bout—a headlock proves ineffective. (U. S. Navy photo.)



OUTSIDE STEPOVER TOEHOLD: *St. Mary's Navy Pre-Flight cadets in actual bout. Wrestling holds emphasized at the school are the basis of the disarming tactics to be used against our enemies. (Official U. S. Navy photo.)*

When I had the indoctrination of wrestling coaches for the Navy Pre-Flight schools at the Academy in 1942, I found that wrestling must be taught as a basic training course before hand to hand technique was given.

Regardless of an accelerated wartime program at the Naval Academy, the 1943 undefeated wrestling team was one of the best ever to represent it. All matches were very well attended by the Regiment.

The 1944 intercollegiate schedule includes eight of the top college and Pre-Flight teams in the East, with the Eastern Collegiate tournament held at Lehigh concluding the schedule.

I sincerely urge all schools and coaches to keep their wrestling programs going.

Let's have a National Tournament in 1944.